

***REMARKS/ARGUMENTS******Information Disclosure Statement***

It is noted that Information Disclosure Statements (IDS's), including PTO-1449 Forms, were submitted on June 7, 2006, February 26, 2007, and November 29, 2007. Since the PTO-1449 Forms were not returned with the Office Action setting forth the restriction, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner initial the appropriate area of the Forms, thereby indicating consideration of the documents, and return the initialed Forms to Applicants. If the Examiner would like another copy of the IDS's, the Examiner is requested to so notify the undersigned by telephone, and additional copies will be promptly supplied.

***The Pending Claims***

Claims 1-13 remain pending.

***THE OFFICE ACTION******The Restriction Requirement***

The Office Action asserts there are 2 distinct inventions (identified as Groups I - II) claimed in the referenced application.

The Official Action asserts that the groups are not so linked so as to form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because under PCT Rule 13.2 they lack the same or corresponding special technique features for the reason that claim 6 is either obvious or anticipated by Hatch (WO 97/32207).

***Election of Group with Traverse***

In order to comply with the requirements of the Patent and Trademark Office, Applicants provisionally elect, *with traverse*, Group I (claims 1-9 and 12-13) drawn to a method of operating a chromatography apparatus.

***Discussion of Restriction Requirement***

The claims of Group I relate to a method of operating a chromatography apparatus, and the claims of Group II relate to a column apparatus. Thus, any search and consideration

of the claimed subject matter of Group I will likely overlap and encompass that for the claimed subject matter of Group II. Accordingly, the searches for these two groups of claims cannot in any way be said to be completely "distinct" or "independent." This does not mean that the claims necessarily stand or fall together, but the overlapping nature of the searches remains and mitigates against a restriction requirement.

Examination of the patent application would be most expeditious by examining all pending claims together.

Moreover, Hatch (WO 97/32207) merely describes a collapsible column for compressing packing material by liquid chromatography columns and methods of use. There is no disclosure or suggestion of, for example, "separating the second end of the column tube and the second end cell structure to provide an access spacing between them, advancing the piston portion of the first end cell structure through the column tube to expose it at the open second end of the column tube, and carrying out maintenance of the piston portion thus exposed" as recited in independent claim 1, and thus, claim 1, as well as dependent claim 6, are novel and unobvious.

*Request for "Brief Description of the Drawings"*

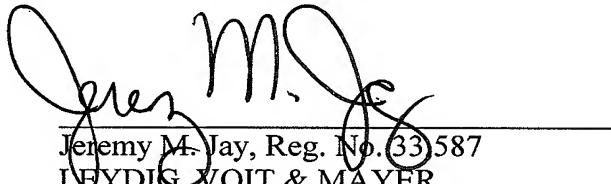
The Office Action requested the submission of a "Brief Description of the Drawings." In accordance with the request, pages 4 and 18 have been amended to place the description of the drawings in a single section, and the heading "Brief Description of the Several Views of the Drawings" has been inserted on page 18.

*Conclusion*

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the restriction requirement.

If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: 21 Oct 2008

JMJ/jj